



Buying Beef for Home Freezers

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Many consumers are contemplating the purchase of bulk beef for home freezers. Beef can be purchased as a live animal or as a dressed beef carcass. Buying beef in quantity may be the way to save money but it depends upon your situation. When buying beef in bulk many questions will arise. This fact sheet contains questions and answers which may be helpful when one considers purchasing beef.

Basically there are 3 ways to buy meat:

- 1) As a whole carcass, or a side (including both hind and forequarters).
- 2) As a wholesale cut, such as a loin, round, chuck, or rib.
- 3) As a retail cut.

The following questions may help decide which way is the best for your situation.

Is It Wise to Buy a Side or a Quarter of Beef to be Cut, Packaged, and Quick Frozen for Freezer Storage?

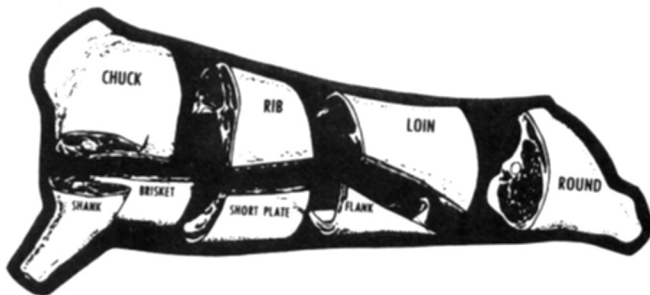
Consider these factors before deciding: The meat cuts served most often; amount of freezer storage space; how much the family consumes in a certain period of time; the community facilities for cutting, packaging, and quick freezing.

What is the Advantage of Buying in Quantity Rather than on a Day to Day or Week to Week Basis?

Consider the amount of money available to invest in one kind of meat, as well as, the total cost and the amount saved by buying a large quantity of beef.

How Many Pounds of Meat will my Freezer Hold?

A rule of thumb is one cubic foot of freezer space for each 35-40 pounds of cut and wrapped meat. Allow slightly more space when the meat is packaged in odd shapes.



Primal (Wholesale) cuts of Beef

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets
are also available on our website at:
<http://osufacts.okstate.edu>

How many Pounds of Meat are there in a Carcass, a Side, a Quarter, or a Wholesale Cut?

An average beef carcass weighs about 600 pounds. A side usually weighs slightly over 300 lbs. This refers to the hanging weight or the gross weight by which the carcass is sold. Remember: the price that one pays is based on the hanging weight. The average weight losses from cutting and trimming make up about 25% of a yield grade 3 carcass leaving about 450 pounds of usable meat cuts from a carcass or 225 pounds from a side. When buying beef one must be familiar with how much fat is on the carcass because this will influence the amount of product in the packages. A rule of thumb for carcass beef is 25% waste, 25% ground beef and stew meat, 25% in steaks, and 25% in roasts.

Cutting and trimming procedures influence the percent retail yield. When fat and bone are removed the percent retail yield decreases. Table 1 shows the approximate retail yields from carcasses of different yield grades.

Table 1. Percent Retail Yields from Carcasses of Different Yield Grades.

Yield Grade	Side % Retail Value	Forequarter % Retail Yield	Hindquarter % Retail Yield
1	82.0	84.0	79.9
2	77.4	79.0	74.9
3	72.8	75.6	69.9
4	68.2	71.4	64.9
5	63.6	67.2	59.9

What are the Advantages to Buying a Whole Carcass or a Side?

When one buys a whole carcass or a side a variety of high and low priced cuts are obtained. You will get some cuts such as the brisket, short ribs, and shank not normally purchased. Usually locker plants and meat markets will convert such cuts into ground meat or stew meat. Meat processors will often age the meat for 10 days or the period desired and will cut it according to specifications. In addition, one may specify how the side or wholesale carcass is cut. For a carcass or a side to be a "good buy" the purchaser must utilize every cut that is made from the carcass. If the family will not eat certain cuts, then it may be wise to have the unacceptable cuts processed into ground beef. If one uses a great deal of ground beef then it may be wise to purchase only the forequarter. Buying a carcass or a side may be less

